The Mormon Pioneer Trail

National Historic Trail
Illinois/Iowa/Nebraska/Wyoming/Utah

U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Map Collection

A unique story . . .

in the westward movement is that of the Mormon Trail. The Mormons, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, journeyed west not for gold but for the chance to build a Zion free from religious persecution. They called their migration to the Great Basin "the gathering." Approximately 70,000 church members, tens of thousands from the British Isles and Scandinavia, followed the trail to Utah between the years 1847 and 1869. Detailed planning, organization and supervision by Church leaders characterized the Mormon migration. Another unique aspect of the gathering was the use of handcarts instead of wagons to carry the belongings of nearly 3,000 poorer "saints" to Utah in the 1850's. After founding Salt Lake City, the Mormons settled over 300 communities in the West. Most settlements were in Utah, but others ranged from Canada to Mexico. These agricultural settlements were important to the economic development of the West. They provided supplies to western towns specializing in mining and other industries.

*Mormon artist C.C.A. Christensen painted the saga of the 1846 departure from Nauvoo, Illinois on the frozen Mississippi.**

A National Historic Trail

Congress memorialized the vital part that trails have played in our Nation's history and recreation needs when they established the National Trails System. The Mormon Pioneer Trail is a component of that system. The National Park Service has identified the official 1,300-mile route, which begins at Nauvoo, Illinois, and extends through the States of Iowa, Nebraska, Wyoming, and into Utah, where it ends at Salt Lake City.

The trail now belongs to the Nation . . . . . While recognized as the first National Historic Trail in the nation, the trail is a coordination of Federal, State, local and private entities. It offers Americans the opportunity to retrace the historical events of the past and provides for the use and enjoyment of the varied recreational resources along its corridor across the heartland of America.

*In the painting of Mormon "Handcart Pioneers", the handcart trail which began in central Iowa is recalled.**

Touring the Trail today

It is still possible to closely follow this 1300-mile-long trail of history. Where wagons once rolled and teams traveled, now highways, railroads, and bridges allow for modern day travel. An auto route has been designated to go from the Mississippi River across the midwest plains and through the Rocky Mountains to descend into the Great Salt Lake Basin.

You are invited to retrace the route. While nearly two-thirds of the trail is now in private ownership, many of the places and events associated with the trail can be seen or visited. We suggest you use the map on the reverse side to guide you as you enjoy the trail.

It is difficult to imagine the hardships of the original traveler as one follows the modern-day highway system. Though many changes have occurred, particularly in the cultural landscape, the same scenic vistas afford one some sense of the challenges of the early users.

*Artist George M. Ottinger painted "Chimney Rock" in Nebraska during his 1861 trek to Utah.**

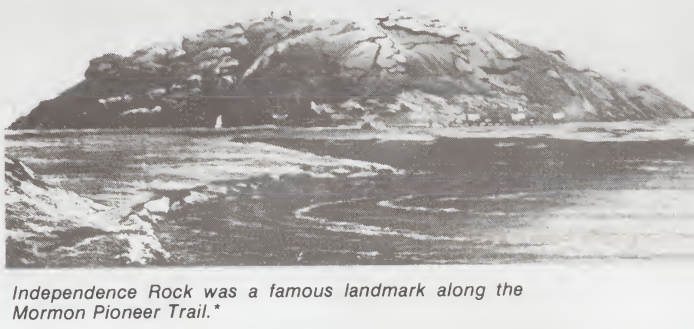
*Fort Laramie, Wyoming in Frederick Piercy engraving, 1855.**

Public use

The eastern end of the trail begins in west central Illinois at the Nauvoo National Historic District. The town of Nauvoo sits on the east bank of the Mississippi River and contains authentically restored buildings, shops, and homes of historic interest. Motel accommodations, restaurants, and stores are located in the area to serve the public.

Seventy-three historic sites have been selected to commemorate and interpret important events and landmarks along the trail. There are also six cross-country trail segments totaling 47 miles on Federal lands, chosen to offer excellent opportunities for hiking, horseback riding, and other appropriate recreational activities. These sites and cross-country segments are identified on the Primary Route Map. Other significant non-federal historic sites could become part of the trail upon certification by the Secretary of the Interior.

The western terminus of the trail is at Pioneer Trail State Park in Salt Lake City, Utah. The area includes "This is the Place" monument and exhibits structures from temporary dugouts to substantial public buildings. The site also offers a wide variety of agricultural activities and interpretive programs that depict everyday pioneer life.



*Independence Rock was a famous landmark along the Mormon Pioneer Trail.**

Administration

The National Park Service has responsibilities that include general planning and technical assistance, performing research, processing applications for certification of additional trail components, providing public information, and staffing the Secretary's Advisory Council. The National Park Service will continue to seek uniformly high standards of protection, interpretation, and management for the trail. The selected historic sites, as well as the six cross-country segments, are on lands which will continue to be managed or owned and operated by other Federal, State, or local agencies or private citizens.

*Salt Lake City, Utah in 1853.**

References

Some privately owned sites do not have public access and should not be visited without permission from the owner. Portions of the cross-country trail have been detoured around private areas to provide trail continuity. For information about access and travel conditions along the trail, the traveler should inquire at the following offices:

**Photographs Courtesy of Historical Society Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.*

State Agencies

Illinois Department of Transportation
2300 South Dirksen Parkway
Springfield, Illinois 62764

Iowa Conservation Commission
Wallace State Office Building
East 9th and Grand
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Nebraska Historical Society
1500 R Street
P.O. Box 82554
Lincoln, Nebraska 68501

Wyoming Recreation Commission
1920 Thomes
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82002

Utah Division of Parks and Recreation
1636 West North Temple
Salt Lake City, Utah 84116

Federal Agencies

National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
655 Parfet Street
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

Bureau of Land Management
State Office
P.O. Box 1828
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82001

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
P.O. Box 25486
Denver Federal Center
Denver, Colorado 80225

Forest Service
Wasatch-Cache National Forest
8226 Federal Building
125 S. State Street
Salt Lake City, Utah 84138

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Primary Route . . .

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

The Pioneer—Brigham Young Route of 1846–1847

0 50 100 MILES
0 50 100 KILOMETERS

NORTH

HISTORIC SITES
CROSS COUNTRY SEGMENTS

"This is the Place" Monument celebrates Brigham Young's arrival in the Salt Lake Valley.

Fort Caspar is near the site where the Mormon pioneers established a ferry on the North Fork of the Platte River.

The great Trails west were once associated with long strings of covered wagons that stretched out to the horizon.

Mormon Island Wayside Park in Nebraska provides recreation and scenic attraction.
Nebraska Game and Park Commission

Ely's Ford on the Des Moines River was a noted river crossing on the Mormon Trail.
Iowa State Conservation Commission

The Nauvoo Visitor Center is the focal point for historical restoration.

Nauvoo Restoration, Inc.

THIS IS THE PLACE
EMIGRATION CANYON
BIG MOUNTAIN
LITTLE EMIGRATION CANYON
HOG'S BACK RUTS*
ECHO CANYON
CACHE CAVE*
THE NEEDLES*
OIL SPRINGS*
FT. BRIDGER/JCT. OREGON TRAIL
CHURCH BUTTE
GREEN RIVER
SIMPSON'S HOLLOW
MORMON FERRY
PARTING OF THE WAYS
MORMON KNOLLS*
SOUTH PASS
BURNT RANCH*
WILLIE'S HANDCART GRAVES*
ROCKY RIDGE
ICE SPRING SLOUGH
THREE CROSSINGS*
SPLIT ROCK
MARTIN'S COVE*
DEVIL'S GATE
INDEPENDENCE ROCK
PROSPECT HILL*
WILLOW SPRINGS*
ROCK AVENUE
NORTH PLATTE RIVER
MORMON FERRY
EMIGRANT GAP
AYERS NATURAL BRIDGE
WARM SPRINGS CANYON*
HEBER'S SPRING*
GUERNSEY RUTS
PORTER'S ROCK*
MEXICAN HILL*
REGISTER CLIFF
FORT PLATTE*
FT. LARAMIE/JCT. OREGON TRAIL
SCOTTS BLUFF
PRAYER CIRCLE BLUFF*
CHIMNEY ROCK
REBECCA WINTERS GRAVE*
COURTHOUSE ROCK
ASH HOLLOW
ANCIENT BLUFF RUINS*
INDIAN LOOKOUT*
SOUTH PLATTE RIVER
ODOMETER FIRST USED*
SANDHILL RUTS*
PLATTE RIVER
100th MERIDIAN
BUFFALO FIRST SIGHTED*
FORT KEARNY
LOUP RIVER
MORMON ISLAND REST AREA
LOUP RIVER CROSSING*
MORMON TRAIL REST AREA
PLATTE RIVER
INDIAN STATION*
MISSOURI RIVER
LIBERTY POLE CAMP
ELKHORN RIVER CROSSING*
ELKHORN RIVER
WINTER QUARTERS
KANESVILLE
MORMON FERRY
INDIAN TOWN*
JUNCTION-HANDCART TRAIL
MORMON LAKE
MT. PISGAH
GARDEN GROVE
LOCUST CREEK*
CHARITON RIVER CROSSING*
ELY'S FORD
DES MOINES RIVER
DES MOINES RIVER CROSSING
SUGAR CREEK CAMP*
MONTROSE LANDING
NAUVOO
MISSISSIPPI RIVER

UTAH
WYOMING
NEBRASKA
IOWA
ILLINOIS

FOR GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE MORMON PIONEER NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL, WRITE, VISIT OR TELEPHONE THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL OFFICE, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, 655 PARFET, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, TELEPHONE: (303) 234–4942.

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U.S. Department of the Interior

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interest of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.